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SUBJECT: ITALIANS AGREE TO LEAD DHI QAR PRT

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY: During a February 12 meeting in Nasiriyah, Italian Ambassador to Iraq Gianludovico de Martino di Montegiordano and Italian Joint Task Force Commander General Natalino Madeddu expressed enthusiasm to National Coordination Team (NCT) Director Greg Bates on forming and leading a Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) in Nasiriyah. In a separate meeting the same day, Dhi Qar Province Governor Aziz Kadum Aluan Al Aghely said he looks forward to continuing a relationship with the Italian Coalition Forces (CF) and having the USG support reconstruction and governance efforts in Dhi Qar. END SUMMARY.

ITALIANS AGREE TO LEAD DHI QAR PRT

¶2. (SBU) At a February 12 meeting in Nasiriyah, NCT Director Bates briefed the PRT initiative to General Madeddu, Ambassador de Martino, and key members of the Italian Joint Task Force. Bates asked for their participation in opening, leading, and supporting a PRT in Dhi Qar Province. The flexibility of the PRT structure, Bates explained, allows it to be individually tailored to each province and easily integrated with existing programs.

¶3. (SBU) General Madeddu expressed enthusiasm about leading a PRT but cautioned that he must obtain final approval from superiors in Italy. The Italians' civilian subject-matter expert team, Madeddu continued, will not be complete until early March (NOTE: Four are currently on board awaiting arrival of team leader. END NOTE.), and he spoke of a reduction of the Italian contingent. Nonetheless, Madeddu expressed confidence that the Italians would be ready to proceed soon with a full PRT; Ambassador de Martino promised that it would be no later than early April. Madeddu readily agreed to accept the pre-positioning of an IRMO Provincial Program Manager in early March who could begin interaction with the provincial government and assist in the establishment of the PRT. Ambassador de Martino said that the Italians will assign a civilian diplomat as team leader and expect him/her to be available in March.

¶4. (SBU) General Madeddu promised logistical support, housing, security, and movement support for the PRT. He identified the availability of a large logistical support staff that would more than adequately meet the needs of an operational PRT. Madeddu said that, although the Italians do not engage in daily movements to meet Iraqi government officials, he understands that the PRT would require such movements, and he foresees no problem meeting such a requirement.

¶5. (SBU) Ambassador de Martino reiterated the Italian Embassy's desire to work closely with the NCT in planning for the establishment of the Dhi Qar PRT, noting that he wishes to begin further planning immediately. Ambassador de Martino also asked about the possibility of placing an Italian officer on the NCT. Bates responded that the NCT would welcome Italian participation on the NCT, which would enhance existing coordination through the Ambassador's participation in Executive Steering Group meetings.

GOVERNOR WELCOMES ITALIAN/USG INITIATIVE

¶6. (SBU) In a separate meeting, Bates informed Governor Aziz of five Provincial Reconstruction Development Committee (PRDC) project approvals for Dhi Qar Province totaling \$6.9M. The USG wants to partner with the Italian contingent in working with Dhi Qar Provincial authorities in order to assist in its development efforts, Bates explained. Bates described the PRTs as having increased civilian participation, civilian leadership, and a focus on developing and sustaining the capabilities of the provincial government.

¶7. (SBU) Governor Aziz thanked the USG for its support of the southern provinces and said he looks forward to Italian-USG cooperation in the PRT. Aziz praised the Italian CF for its reconstruction assistance and spoke of the need for greater efforts in Dhi Qar. The infrastructure is "horrendous," he said, citing major

BAGHDAD 00000500 002 OF 002

needs in the water, sewage, and electrical systems. He complained that northern provinces have received more attention and funding from the USG. Bates pointed out that the USG has funded projects totaling more than \$500M that are complete, currently in progress, or planned for Dhi Qar.

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